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MILITARY USES OF THE SEA TO THE YEAR 2000

by

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Military Uses of the Sea to the Year 2000

by

James John Tritten

On October 13, 1775, the Continental Congress authorized the outfitting of a 10-gun warship to intercept such transports as might be laden with stores for the enemy, Great Britain. By December 3, 1775, Lieutenant John Paul Jones broke the American flag aboard two 24-gun warships, the Alfred and the Columbus.

Despite a history which always enjoyed a navy and a constitution affirming that Congress must provide and maintain a navy (but only raise and support armies), this nation tends to forget that it is essentially an island, with the sea ever interwoven with the aspirations of its people for freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of individual dignity.

Our seafaring tradition has long included economic pursuits; from the Yankee clipper rounding the Horn to the best and brightest minds from our universities now devising ways to exploit the ocean's resources. Many Americans are involved with these economic aspects of the sea, searching for or developing oil and gas, or building the machines that work on or under the sea. Vast numbers of Americans are recreational users of the oceans while virtually all of us enjoy the bountiful gifts of ocean fisheries.

As economic and recreational users of the oceans, we have questioned whether our enterprises are efficient, secure, or equitable; meaning, how well can we make our ideas work, enjoy the fruits of our labor, and how fair it will be. Few major

activities involving the seas in the future can pass the tests of efficiency and security. Exploiting gas, oil and minerals in the ocean depths are examples of activities that may not grow as much as one might desire due to our inability to ensure that benefits exceed costs or because we cannot safeguard investments.

Because of these concerns, only a few ocean activities will continue to receive a great deal of public and private support through the end of the century. Ports and harbors are included in this group and we should expect them to be upgraded. Marine recreation is likely to be supported by the individual citizen and marine recreation facilities sufficient governmental support to be managed for the foreseeable future.

Besides these two oceanographic pursuits, it is probably safe to predict that the world navies will be the single largest recipient of future ocean resources. Unlike economic pursuits, navies generally do not have to pass the normal tests of efficiency before a nation decides to create or maintain one. Defense of the nation, including the sea, is a prerequisite if its citizens are to enjoy their hard won rights, freedoms, and the fruits of a free enterprise system. There will be budget cuts, of course, but even with across-the-board cuts for defense, navies will not be allowed to vanish nor even be totally reshaped using a different mold.

Simply put, this means we in the United States Navy can fashion a long-range strategic plan that assumes we will need and have a fleet for the next 50+ years. Very few businesses can make such basic planning assumptions. Conversely, we can never start with a clean slate. We will always proceed from the

existing fleet as a baseline when deciding upon the requirements for our fleet in the future.

Central to maintaining liberty is accepting that with rights come responsibilities. Preserving our way of life requires vision, courage, and a commitment to pay whatever price is necessary. The key question, of course, is how much is enough? How much should be devoted to defense, to navies, and to the supporting maritime infrastructure that enables our political goals to be attained in peace and, if necessary, in war. How much can we afford to let revised political goals drive programming given the investment we have already made in today's fleet and the building program already underway?

Why a Navy?

According to former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, "the purpose of naval forces is to prevent the seas from becoming a medium of attack upon the United States, and to ensure that the United States has unimpeded use of the seas where and when we must have use of them in war and peace." This mission has broad bipartisan support in Congress. In this article, I will discuss the reason why the average American should support a strong United States Navy.

First, our strategic nuclear naval forces are deployed to ensure that any adversary would be deterred from launching a strategic nuclear strike on the United States by the maintenance of U.S. forces that could launch an unacceptable retaliatory blow. This deterrent force has recently been enhanced by the addition of long-range tomahawk cruise missiles and will be

upgraded as the Trident II submarine launched ballistic missile comes on-line.

As part of this deterrence of nuclear and general war, the Navy has developed a national maritime strategy emphasizing forward conventional operations against a highly capable enemy's most vital resources. The strategy postulates that if sufficiently strong actions are within our power to take at sea during the initial, non-nuclear stages of a war, an enemy will lose the confidence he needs to control escalation and the outcome of a war; hence he will be deterred from going to war in the first place.

Strong offensive actions in sea areas vital to the Soviet Union and, if necessary, against his homeland, will be undertaken by a combined arms force of carrier battle groups, modern submarines, and land based air power. We are getting smarter in our operations at sea, and joint actions by all services with our allies are now the rule rather than the exception. Success in these operations will help keep the Soviet military near or inside the Soviet and away from trans-oceanic sea and air lines of communications.

The current maritime strategy makes good reading if you want to understand our worldwide obligations and the Navy's contributions. Perhaps most importantly, this maritime strategy is a consensus of what experienced and knowledgeable U.S. naval officers think about operations across the full spectrum of warfare. The strategy was developed with appropriate consultation with allied navies and is in accordance with our national military strategy.

Much included in "strategic planning" might sound adventuristic, but such contingency planning is essential if we are to be perceived as strong and thus preserve deterrence. Neither the Navy nor the Department of Defense is planning to initiate the next war but are instead trying to account for the full range of possibilities in a very unstable world. If we are to achieve our national political objectives and at the same time stay out of the war, then some group of professionals must think about the very nature of war itself and be clearly seen as being capable of winning one.

Of course, we are not living in a vacuum. We have to think not only about war from our own perspective but also from the perspective of any likely enemy. For example, the Russians, unlike us, are less impressed with punishment as a means of deterrence than they are with a nation with the perceived capability to prevent them from attaining those objectives they think will be needed in the event of a war. In other words, quality war-fighting is what the Russians appear to respect most; such capability will therefore serve deterrence the best.

If a war were to occur, the navies would fight with the forces they had at the time. The navy that nations choose to build in peacetime are the tools available to that nation as it seeks to use military force to achieve political objectives in war. As Mr. Lehman stated, the navy's role in war also is to "prevent the seas from becoming a medium of attack upon the United States." Hence, if we are to take defense of the homeland seriously, we must act now to attain the capability.

Navies are more than mere instruments of deterrence and of fighting wars. They are also major instruments of political statecraft, useful in the projection of power or maintaining an overseas presence. The U.S. Navy has been the most frequent military instrument of choice by all administrations, Republican or Democrat, whenever there was a crisis or the need to use a military force to make a significant political statement. Whenever a crisis erupts, one of the first questions asked is "where is the fleet?"

Our recent operations in the Persian Gulf attest to this. When there are chinks in the fleet, as with a ready deployed minesweeping capability, we are asked how that was allowed to happen, too. Hence, we cannot plan our future fleet merely on what served us well in the past. Unfortunately, political scientists are not able to create a perfect crystal ball that will predict the uses of our fleet tomorrow.

Just as we recognize the political value of navies, so too does the Soviet Union. From an assessment of their literature, their capabilities as expressed in the hardware that they buy, and the manner in which they exercise, it is clear that the Soviets have read Mahan and Clausewitz and studied their lessons well. Can we say that we have configured our future fleet to attain the most likely political goals that will be expected, given the uncertainties? The dilemma of the inability to predict political requirements and need to build ships now often results in building the maximum capability allowable by technology and then room to grow.

Through a skillful combined use of naval forces, their merchant marine, and fishing fleets, the Soviet Union is expanding its presence overseas worldwide. They possess the largest research, fishing, and passenger fleets in the world. Their seductive pattern is to approach foreign nations and offer to pay to fish within the Exclusive Economic Zone; then to conduct research; and finally to improve the efficiency of those efforts by leaving the ships deployed overseas and flying relief crews in and out.

Trade naturally follows, as does an offer to upgrade airfields and ports. These efforts are more competitive than ours because the Soviet state provides the hardware and sets salaries at unrealistically low rates. The Soviet merchant marine can set its prices below fair market rates to enter that market and capture a part of it. This is an unfortunate asymmetry and one that is difficult to counter given our free enterprise economic system.

The Soviet merchant marine has grown from just over 400 ships after World War II to some 2500 today. We are all aware of the deterioration of the U.S. flag fleet, from a high of around 4500 ships in 1945 to around 600 ships today, less than one-fourth the number in the Soviet fleet. Even with the assistance of allies, we must do more to redress the imbalance. How, is the obvious question - with the equally obvious answer of, devoting more resources. Competing needs for scarce resources, however, often relegates lower order contingencies below the funded program lines. The Soviets on the other hands, seem to understand the real lesson of Mahan - that sea power is more than just

naval power.

The Russians are respected for their innovative designs for maritime vessels and successfully adapting foreign technologies to a wide variety of oceanographic purposes. Soviet shipbuilders have already demonstrated that they can produce the world's deepest diving and fastest submarines. They have no difficulty experimenting with new ship designs and often build new ships that would never leave the drawing boards in the U.S. We will probably be unable to completely stop the flow of critical technology that helps the Soviets build better sea power; we will likely only be able to delay that transfer and raise its price.

Traditionally, the U.S. Navy has not been used to enforce domestic laws but we are beginning to see an expanded role in this area. With the new Law of the Sea Treaty and President Reagan's declaration of an Exclusive Economic Zone, the navy will find itself more in the role of enforcement than ever before. Even the most successful nation cannot afford the ships required to maintain a presence in these new ocean areas, and we will have to negotiate with the Coast Guard over roles and missions in an era of dwindling budgets. Smaller nations cannot afford both a revenue service and some navies combine these functions. This is an opportunity for those in the aircraft and shipbuilding industries to provide hardware to emerging navies of smaller nations.

Navies are used by all nations to express an interest in certain key areas. Our sailors, airmen, and marines, men and women alike, are on duty throughout the seven seas, signalling the commitment of America to its national security and its allies

throughout the world. These servicemen and women are a vital reminder of American power committed to help our friends maintain their independence and freedom.

Navies, of course, are also symbols of great power status; only the wealthiest can afford the modern navy and its multipurpose carrier battle groups. Only the wealthiest can afford those vehicles that can dive to the bottom of the Marianas Trench. Only the most advanced nations can afford a navy that can, in the face of opposition, project power ashore in some distant foreign land. Can we afford not to have such a first-rate Navy?

Navies are Unique

In thinking about navies, we must also reckon with some of the more unique properties of naval warfare and military operations on the high seas. We might debate the degree of uniqueness; are these properties sufficiently different to matter? I think they are and would like to give you some examples:

First, navies and those who work on or under the oceans, operate in a unique environment, in the form of geographic and weather phenomena. It is far easier to support and sustain life on land than it is to do on, or under, the sea.

Second, due to the size and opacity of the oceans, nations can hide their forces at sea. I am amused by some civilian "experts" who write that due to advances in antisubmarine warfare our nuclear ballistic missile submarines are at risk. Fortunately search, detection, classification, localization, tracking, and attack techniques have not progressed to the state

where the navy is incapable of carrying out its deterrence missions.

Third, a major war at sea is automatically a global war. If the two superpowers were to ever fight in a general war, say in Europe, it is inconceivable that the navies of those powers would render honors when passing each other anywhere else on the globe, for example, in the Pacific.

Fourth, war at sea has no FEBAs, or FLOTs, terms used by armies to describe the dividing lines between combatants. At sea, the enemy can and does strike from every point of the compass, from land, from the air, from the surface of the oceans, and from beneath the seas. We now have to comprehend the military uses of space when we consider war at sea. Indeed, why should we even assume that the next war would start <u>on</u> planet Earth?

Fifth, while land warfare is fought to possess territory, war at sea is over communications; the sea lines of communication. The purpose of naval operations at sea today is the same as in the days of Roman galleys or Spanish galleons; so that nations can use the sea whenever and wherever they desire. Implicit in this argument is the realization that navies <u>also</u> exist to deny an enemy his unfettered use of the sea. Our Navy must be able to frustrate an enemy Navy's ability to strike the United States in the event of a war.

The sea is a no man's land owned by no one. Navies have a unique right to transit over, on, and under the ocean from our own shores to the territorial seas of any other nation. Navies also have the right of innocent passage through another nation's

territorial seas; a legal right not shared by land armies.

Once out of sight of land, the captain of a ship is in a special position of both responsibility and authority. Throughout history, the men who have been attracted to sea services have tended to be independent and able to improvise given broad directions. In our age of instant long-distance communications, our naval commanders will undoubtedly receive more direction from shore-based headquarters. This ability might also raise the level of consciousness of our national leaders and the public as to the value of and necessity for a navy. These new communication techniques are thus both a blessing and a drawback.

Conclusion

There is a strong interrelationship between navies and international politics. Navies are about war and the threat and the actual use of forces as an instrument of statecraft; and war and the threat of force is about politics. Having the capability to fight a war, we hope we will never have to. Being able to fight a war and the deterrence of war is what the citizens of this nation hire its navy to do.

Our citizens should not be alarmed about talk of the use of force to achieve political goals but, rather, should be comforted that its government takes its responsibilities very seriously and is constantly working to ensure that the nation <u>is</u> <u>secure</u>, can enjoy its freedoms, and maintain its way of life. Navies are but one very important tool that governments can use to achieve these goals.

Navies are not the end all, which is probably the last

unique property that I should impart. The U.S. Navy cannot "win" a future war against a major continental power; it will take combined arms to do that. It will take a man in-uniform with a gun-to occupy, and administer territory, and settle post-war boundaries.

The closest that navies came to winning a recent major war was in the Pacific against Japan. But even there, Admiral Nimitz agreed, strategic bombing played a significant role in the decision to terminate the war prior to an actual invasion of the islands. As the remainder of this century unfolds, we will see a more integrated approach to warfare, a joint or combined arms approach that capitalizes upon the attributes of all our military services.

It not robust enough to survive the initial stages of a future war, and if not capable of "sailing into harms way," however, the U.S. Navy could lose that war. This was the situation facing the British Grand Fleet in WWI. Admiral Sir John Jellico could not win WWI for the allies but if he allowed the German High Seas Fleet to break the blockade and threaten the allied sea lines of communication, he might cause its loss. The risk of failure, however was great enough to cause the British to wait in Scapa Flow instead of sailing into the Baltic. The German's, on the other hand, had to risk sending their fleet into the North Sea, since they knew they could not win without defeating allied sea power. Admiral Reinhard Scheer's failure to achieve his strategic goal of breaking the blockade and disrupting the sea lines of communication contributed significantly to the Kaiser's eventual downfall.

Unless this country is prepared to fight future wars on U.S. soil, it must transport its men and materials overseas so that those wars would be fought on someone else's territory. Those men and material cross the oceans and need to be protected by a navy. The national maritime strategy is designed to do those tasks if we are ever to fight a war in the future. We hope the perceived ability to successfully execute the maritime strategy will convince an enemy that he cannot control the war or achieve his own war aims; thus giving him cause to not go to war or to terminate before a war escalates vertically or turns into a long war of attrition that he knows he cannot win.

The U.S. is an island nation; dependent upon the unfettered use of the high seas for maintenance of our present style of life. If we are to continue to exercise the influence throughout the world that we apparently desire to, it will be up to the Navy to explain how it can apply military force to achieve political goals in time of war or peace.

The challenges facing the national leadership throughout this century are to achieve our political objectives at the lowest possible cost. In doing so, the senior leadership of the Navy must help the other services, joint and OSD organizations, the White House, the Congress, and above all, the American public to recognize the unique properties of operations at sea and what navies can do, and will continue to do, for this nation. If we in the Navy fail to meet the challenge, there are others who will gladly accept the responsibilities of leadership and the influence that would inevitably follow.

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